

## The Hidden Greatness in *The Dwarf*

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**Abstract** This study concerns *The Dwarf* (*Dvärgen*) by Pär Lagerkvist. The author wanted to give his tribute to the Renaissance masters by letting the dwarf express his scorn and contempt for humanism. Further, Lagerkvist wanted to characterize the greatness and lowness of Man through the prince and his innate dwarf. It is a general conception that the prince character in this novel has retrieved properties from Machiavelli's Prince. Thus, the research question is whether Lagerkvist, accordingly, through the evil dwarf's admiration for the prince expresses his contempt for the Machiavellian prince model or whether the doubleness that sometimes emerges in the dwarf's narrative in fact means the opposite standpoint. By analysing a student's essay on *The Dwarf* with PTA/Vertex and comparing the resulting holophors with a sentence from Machiavelli, used in a previous study, it could be shown that the student without knowing it had picked up from Lagerkvist's tale the dualistic mental structure of Machiavelli, synthesized in the terms of *Heresy* in the Orientation dimension and *Move* in the Intention dimension. The conclusion is that Lagerkvist's prince character represents such dualistic properties that refer to a utilitarian outlook.

### *Some Preconditions*

During the last decade, research on Pär Lagerkvist has become relevant again after having been relatively quiet for a long time. A few works can be mentioned as example, which at the same time are demonstrating the variety of research aspects that Lagerkvist's work may give rise to. Stefan Klint (2001) discusses the evangelical motif in Lagerkvist's writings, in particular from a theological point of view. Karin Fabreus (2002) puts a literary perspective on his works in focusing on the tale, myth and modernism of Lagerkvist. Moreover, Lagerkvist's son Bengt Lagerkvist has published a biographical description (2001) of his father's youth. Additional perspectives on Lagerkvist are given by Håkan Möller (2009, 2012), who deals with the birth and success of the authorship, the attitude of the societal institutions towards the writer's works, the market at the time of publication, and the writer's conscious career aspirations. An international example is Nitya Morales Vázquez (2007), who focuses on unreliable narration on the borderline between ethics and aesthetics, with reference to *The Dwarf*.

Pär Lagerkvist's writings are characterized by a reverence for life and man, that is, human conditions on the whole, but not necessarily a belief in God. This attitude to life often expresses itself in a "holy seriousness", reinforced through the consciously simplified language. *Gäst hos verkligheten* (*Guest of Reality*) and *Barabbas* are two novels that for a long period of time surely belonged to the compulsory reading in the Swedish upper secondary school. However, today's students have the possibility to choose for themselves what to read to deepen their literature studies. They rarely feel the need of the Jesus problems in Lagerkvist's novels and hardly of his idyllic poems, which are frequently reproduced in school anthologies. On the contrary, it seems as if stories about evil are saleable, either in the form of thrillers, fairy tales or realistic novels. Lagerkvist's narrative *Dvärgen* (*The Dwarf*) belongs to the kind that young people like. This is apparent in students' remarks and opinions that are visible on the internet.

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The results of literary analyses depend on selection of materials and the method applied. Usually the researcher has a preliminary conception of an aspect of an authorship, a working hypothesis that he/she puts to a test. Ideally the researcher will contribute with something original. The study that I have decided to present is not within the normal limits of literary analysis or sociology of literature. Yet it treats an author's text in order to catch something that cannot be seen with hitherto existing methodology. The source is a straight question that I got from a student during a lesson in a Swedish classroom. We had dealt with the Renaissance period in literature and culture and the reading of *Dvärgen* was selected for a deeper study. The question concerned Lagerkvist's thoughts about Machiavelli against the background of the portrait of the prince in the novel.

My way of taking on the issue scientifically is a bit different and the text analysis method I apply is innovative, at least in literary contexts. A frequent idea about the literary text is that the author is present in it. The method I will use is based on the idea that any text includes in an imperative way its creator and that it is possible to get sight of him/her in an objective way, namely by catching the intention component formally. The intention of the text appears in the twisted forward motion and not at all in any declared intention of the author. One can also express it so that the writer writes himself into the text. Lagerkvist's speech to Uppsala students in 1942 is a concrete example, where he says his landscapes almost always are depicting Småland, his home region, even when he does not intend it and all by themselves without him knowing about it (Nettervik, 1998). What thus is hidden in the text is a mental structure, which the writer does not need to be aware of. Structure, which is timeless and formless as well as invisible on the surface, reflects mentality, and therefore it can be transferred over time and also be independent of the individual who produced it. That which is materialized is *invariance*.

For sure a scientific method must have the capability to describe, explain, and even lead to predictions as opposed to an artistic approach, which is based on the surprise effect. Therefore, it is a pleasure to present a study that incorporates both scientific and aesthetic novelty in the description of the results. Hopefully, the answer to the student's question will highlight yet another glimmer of Lagerkvist.

Before I continue, I like to comment on some Swedish references. My main source is Ingrid Schöier's (1987) biography of Pär Lagerkvist. Although the quotes are translated, I use quotation marks when I want to emphasize the significance of a phrase or sentence. The same holds for the quotes from Lagerkvist's novel, which I use in the original illustrated version. Nevertheless, I have chosen to keep Schöier's Swedish original at a couple of places. The basic materials in her presentation are diaries, notes, and letters, which she treats with care and sensitivity, and I doubt that I can make full justice to its style if I turn it into English. Instead, I give its approximate meaning together with comments in the hope that this way of solving the problem will be satisfactory.

### **On the duality in *Dvärgen***

Around 1900 and a few decades thereafter, scientists' and philosophers' modern ideas and philosophies of life began to have particular relevance to the intellectual life, which may be seen in light of the new secular society. It is known that Lagerkvist, like several other writers and artists, had sympathies for movements such as solar and light worship as well as for radical political ideas put forward by the young socialists. In addition, the exploration of the human psyche had a renewed interest, since psychoanalysis seemed to bring explanations that the literary authors up till then had only been able to suggest intuitively.

From the biography (Schöier, 1987) it appears that during his first literary years, Pär Lagerkvist was highly indifferent to psychoanalytic ideas. However, when he realized that

even the Nazis had a negative attitude towards this direction, he changed his mind, only to be able to demonstrate his anti-Nazism. He participated in scenarios where he could show his contempt for the trends of the 1930's and "could not stand people who were Hitler friendly" (Schöier, 1987, p. 378).

In her biography, Ingrid Schöier summarises Lagerkvist's philosophy of life in a few lines:

Lagerkvist ser alltid livet "sub specie aeternitatis" – men kan ibland uppträda som en gnom, "liten och surögd", inför stjärnevalvets överväldigande storhet. Han ställer även storheten och litenheten hos människan själv mot varandra. "Vidunderlig, vidunderlig är människan!" Kanske har ordets dubbelbetydelse föresvävat honom. (p. 203)

He sees life with the eternal perspective but can sometimes behave like a little bleary-eyed gnome (quote from Lagerkvist himself) when he realizes the magnificence of the starry sky. Thus, he is also contrasting the greatness and lowness of man himself. Finally, Schöier makes a comment about her quote on the third line, that is, Lagerkvist's admiration for humans: 'vidunderlig' means both marvelous and monstrous in Swedish.

Lagerkvist treats opposites like democracy – dictatorship and humanism – violence in different ways from the early poetry to *Bödeln* (*The Executioner*) (1933). Actually, that which is reflected is the dualism that exists between the two basic principles, which either contradicts each other or are complementary, like good and evil, darkness and light. The main character in *Bödeln* is giant-like and primitive, which means that there is a consistency between his appearance and the forces associated with it. When Lagerkvist about a decade later publishes *Dvärgen* (1944), he attributes the primitive properties to a short figure. Where the executioner's evil can be recognized by the external characteristics and the open violence, the dwarf's evil is more hidden and perhaps because of this much more dangerous (Schöier, 1987, p. 411). In this story, interpreters have very clearly seen the allegorical description of the new violent powers that crept up during the thirties. The publisher Tor Bonnier found in an otherwise positive letter to Lagerkvist that "the allegory had become too apparent" (Schöier, 1987, p. 413). Already in 1945, an English translation of the book was announced in *The Saturday Review* by Henry B. Krantz, who closes: "And we hope the reader will not overlook the symbolic comparison of those times (Renaissance) and ours" (p. 74).

Lagerkvist received most praise for the poetry collection *Ångest* (*Anguish*) and the prose narratives *Dvärgen* and *Barabbas*. In retrospect, he felt that he had revealed too much of his private life. Naturally, they contain a lot of his opinions and feelings about the Zeitgeist and political events but they were records of personal relationships too. At several points in the biography, Schöier puts forward that Lagerkvist was rather short of stature, a fact that was of psychological significance to him. Moreover, he was youngest in the family. People who met him for the first time after he had become famous could sometimes be astonished that he was not tall, because, as everybody knew, from his writings emanated an aura of greatness and nobility.

The artist Gösta Adrian-Nilsson is said to have uttered that "physiologically he was a disillusion" (Schöier, 1987, p. 196). Others, for example the writer Per Hallström, member of the Swedish Academy, meant that he was "a small and decent man", sympathetic and reasonable (Schöier, 1987, p. 390). Following the discussion of Olof Lagercrantz, a well-known academic scholar and debater of literature, everybody must be filled with awe and respect before a man like him, because although he is "small and stooped" and as if marked by spirit, he "brings alive the human within himself" (Schöier, 1987, s 390-391). During all the years when he was struggling against publishers and reviewers, Pär Lagerkvist expressed a feeling that he was carrying a mission. "I am god's writing assistant on earth," he once said in his diary. (Note: small initial letter in 'god's' was deliberate.) This certainty was sometimes

inferred from the way he was carrying his head high and from his sometimes passionate, sometimes mildly enigmatic, introspective gaze.

In our times, it may seem a bit strange that peoples' appearance was openly commented, especially when the intellectual work should be at the forefront. It may probably be attributed to the ideas that were prevailing during the first half of the 1900's, with its preoccupation with physiognomic measuring and valuation of people. Being small meant in this atmosphere to be insignificant. In the Thirties, Europe hailed the power and the gleaming steel, smallness and weakness was not the future. In this perspective, the dwarf becomes multilayered. Adopting the dwarf perspective on the events of life, to position oneself in the "basement", means both to disparage oneself, to be a "sub man", and to affirm the beast in man. Both private letters and correspondence with publishers show that Lagerkvist placed himself in the basement when he felt himself out of step in the world. He was also periodically afraid of himself when he discovered that he could come up with the idea to be able to commit violence against, and even kill, his first wife. The fear for the dwarf within him made him extra fascinated of the doubleness of man, in the present context interpreted as duality, where two different magnitudes cooperate (presuppose each other) to form the unity of man. Schöier (1987, p. 369) means that the twin motif ("the split") occupied him a great deal, in particular since he became father of twins. He also called himself a twin nature (born in the Gemini star sign, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May).

The physiognomy of real dwarfs differs from normal short-statured people in that their legs and arms are disproportionately small, while the rest of the body is of normal size. In addition, the head is slightly larger than expected. On this basis, the dwarfs have had the role to be displayed as exotic, even hilarious. Don Sebastian de Morra, dwarf of the Spanish Court, was depicted by Velazquez around 1645 with a clear duality in the expression (Museo del Prado, Madrid). He sits so that his legs emphasize his very small dolly-like size (perspective from the front), while his face shows a mature manhood. The overall impression of the portrait becomes more distressing than amusing. However, is not unusual for the abnormal in the dwarf appearance to be considered as unpleasant and therefore be related to unpleasant characteristics, such as unreliability, cunning and wickedness. This concerns at least the mythical dwarf, gnome, elf, or goblin of the legends. When Lagerkvist created the dwarf character, he certainly had this mythical figure in mind. In this way the executioner was transformed into the dwarf.

With respect to its theme, *Dvärgen* is a war novel, located in an Italian Renaissance environment. Lagerkvist was very careful to create atmosphere as reliable as possible and sought the assistance of friends and acquaintances with historical and cultural knowledge before publication. We recognize allusions to literary and artistic works, biblical contexts and political and religious strife of the time. But he was not eager for the events to be historically accurate. However, most interpreters agree that the prince figure credibly reflects an historical character as Cesare Borgia, who is one of the rulers that Niccolò Machiavelli refers to in *The Prince*. You can also find features that can be attributed to Ludovico Sforza, and Lorenzo di Medici. The ideal prince of the Renaissance was one who in favour of the people could reconcile religion, culture, science and politics. To arm himself for war was necessary sometimes in order to protect himself against abuse of power and to maintain peace. In this way, religion and war became two arms that were united in action for a common goal. Borgia was cardinal and warlord at the same time. Leonardo da Vinci (Maestro Bernardo) was both artist and military strategist. The duality concept is further apparent in the Princess figure. She symbolizes passion, which assembles both bodily lusts and religious suffering. More intricate is the portrayal of the dwarf as an intrinsic part of the prince, that is, the prince and the dwarf represents two sides of the same person.

Today's readers have certainly a considerable distance to the Second World War, although still no difficulty to understand the allusions to events of that time, for example that the prince is building up a war machine, and that science is used in the service of power, as a previous study has shown (B. Bierschenk & I. Bierschenk, 2003/2013). These thoughts are clearly expressed by a younger person (A), who has a known analytical-descriptive approach in perceiving and reproducing the essence of read texts. A person of the same age (B) but with a synthetic-reflective approach concentrates on the actual course of events and discusses explanations for the dwarf's evil and that it is in the personal failure and hatred that wars are born. The first person tells about the prince's unjust exercise of power, while the other speaks of the evil forces in the dwarf, which are undelivered and therefore make him a monster (B. Bierschenk & I. Bierschenk, 2003/2013, p. 23). It does not mean that any of the two readers did understand the duality in the design.

### ***Machiavelli and Dvärgen***

*Dvärgen* can further be characterized as a problem novel. The biography mentions that Lagerkvist wanted to portray human greatness in the prince and the lowness in the dwarf, the fool (Schöier, 1987, s 412). Of course, the expression "human greatness" has to do with inner qualities. Lagerkvist, who had fought for the victory of classical humanism in the Thirties, wanted to pay tribute to the Renaissance masters, indirectly through the dwarf's scorn and contempt for humanism. The only person the dwarf does not despise is the prince; he rather admires his capacity to give priority of power over morality. If this narration technique is consistently implemented, this admiration in turn implies an indirect contempt for the prince model that Machiavelli argued for, at least as it emerges through the dwarf's eyes. But the dwarf's admiration is not undivided. When the prince shows his humane and chivalrous side during the war, as not letting the dwarf (cruelty) out to the front line or behaving high-minded against the enemy, the dwarf rather despises him. The prince can also discuss life issues with Bernardo or hang out with the simple people, even in enemy territory, which the dwarf ridicules or does not understand. It may be assumed that the author has suggested that there is something in the prince that dwarf eyes cannot perceive, something that makes the prince "great" in an ordinary viewer's eye. It is a fact that the dwarf cannot see "the magnificence of the starry sky".

There are now several assumptions about Machiavelli's idea with his mirror for princes depending on whether you interpret the subject religiously or politically. If you follow an early interpretation, the prince model is heretical while later times rather interpret a pragmatic outlook. There is a quote from Machiavelli, which is not taken from the mirror but from his vast correspondence, and often cited as central to the understanding of his ideas (Machiavelli, 1996). The quotation is here reproduced in the original:

*Perché io credo che questo sarebbe il vero modo ad andare in paradiso: imparare la via dello inferno per fuggirla* (Niccolò Machiavelli, lettera a Francesco Guicciardini del 17 maggio 1521).

Machiavelli says that he thinks the only way to get to paradise is to learn the way to hell in order to avoid it.

B. Bierschenk has analysed both the Italian original version and the English translation of the utterance. For the purpose here, only the original is of interest. A holophoric description (B. Bierschenk, 2012, p. 14) has given two energy landscapes, one displaying the orientation of the text and one displaying the intention. The method behind the description is fully explained in the report, and since it can be read online, this information is not given here. Additional information about the theory and practice of the method can also be found online (I. Bierschenk & B. Bierschenk, 2011, 2013a, b; B. Bierschenk, 2011).

A holophor is a three-dimensional representation of the concentration of energy in a text. The global attractor (final singularity), i.e. the point along the holographic path that collects most of the structure in the orientation, is *Heretic* while it is *Warning* in the intention. The pathway, which includes both the state and the dependency between attractors in an irreversible process, is investigated (B. Bierschenk, 2012, pp.15-17). *Heretic* in this context refers to a person who seeks knowledge in order to control what could be called superstition. *Warning* means that it is important to be on guard so that one can handle one's existence. It is therefore a balancing act to be able to observe both the intersection and connection line, which is the expression of a duality-based approach to life.

### *In a Young Viewer's Eye*

The link to the Machiavellian background in *Dvärgen* may be found in the report on the two young readers (B. Bierschenk & I. Bierschenk, 2003/2013). The idea is that the person (B), who has proved sensitive to structure in learning situations over a long time (B. Bierschenk, 2005; I. Bierschenk, 2005) will act as intermediary between the structure of Lagerkvist's fictional portrayal of the Renaissance environment and the structure that the real Renaissance man has accomplished. Lagerkvist transformed the Zeitgeist of Renaissance into the 1940s. Can we through a young contemporary reader's transformation of Lagerkvist's text discover a Machiavellian dualistic structure in *Dvärgen*? In that case, Machiavelli would also be included among the Renaissance masters whom Lagerkvist has honoured.

The text to be analysed is the one that person (B) wrote as a 17-year-old high school student in answer to a test question after reading *Dvärgen*. The question was given orally. First, the test question is presented, then the answer. In B. Bierschenk and I. Bierschenk (2003/2013, p. 11) both are presented in original Swedish. Here it is sufficient to provide a literal translation to give a hint of the textual characteristics.

#### *Test question:*

Now you have studied the period of Renaissance and have deepened your studies by reading a novel. The book was written in 1944, but the action plan of it has been transferred to the times of Renaissance, for various reasons. Among other things, this book is called a problem novel. What I (teacher) would like to know from you now is: What idea is the most central one? Explain what you mean. Write briefly.

#### *Student's answer (literal translation):*

Something that I begin to think of is that violence is breeding violence. The Dwarf is like a cup, which one has tried to fill up with too much bitterness and cynicism. Now he consists of hatred only. # And to hate that much he must you know actually hate himself. # His mother pushed him away, the people make fun of him. # He seems to try to maintain a self-image of dreadful egoism and arrogance/vanity but it breaks through. If he cannot love anything outside himself, he can hardly have anything to love in him. # Everything that is beautiful he regards as ugly. Everything which others enjoy is tormenting him. On the contrary, everything that causes pain gives him pleasure. Maybe because he hits back. Now they will experience the pain I have sustained. That which is strange is how he can torture those who in fact have showed him a kind of trust, the Princess with her words, the daughter with her slander about Giovanni. # So, in one way the idea feels to be why one hates and why one should become a pacifist. # War just creates more war, massacre just makes more blood flow, and revenge and murder of honour just creates a vicious circle. # Just think had they only let it be peace between the principalities? Then probably several lives had been saved, among others the young lovers', who one day maybe had married and twinned together the kingdoms, and the Princess. (# = paragraph)

## **The Essence of the Text**

A text is the result of a perspectivation. Its effect depends on how well the student can "sense" the structure of the text and convey it in writing. It should be noted once again that the structure, by being hidden, is not the same as the content, which the reader can form his own opinion about by reading the text above. This text was spontaneously produced and will

be analyzed without editing. The many paragraphs and sentences that seem a bit sprawling interact after all and form a synthesis that expresses the essence of the text. The method to be used (PTA/Vertex) can access the essence that has no directly visible connection to the surface. The synthesis is the result of collaboration between textual Agents and Objectives, known as the AaO-axiom. Since the previous analysis was carried out, the method has been developed in some significant aspects (I. Bierschenk & B. Bierschenk, 2004, 2011; B. Bierschenk, 2011; I. Bierschenk, 2011). This applies particularly to the precision of the string theoretical treatment of the language interfaces that are related to Greene's (1999) theory of super strings.

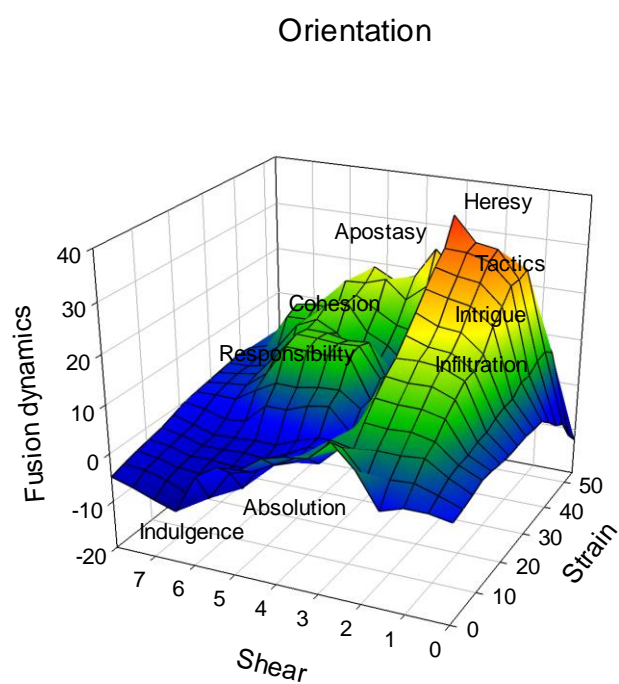
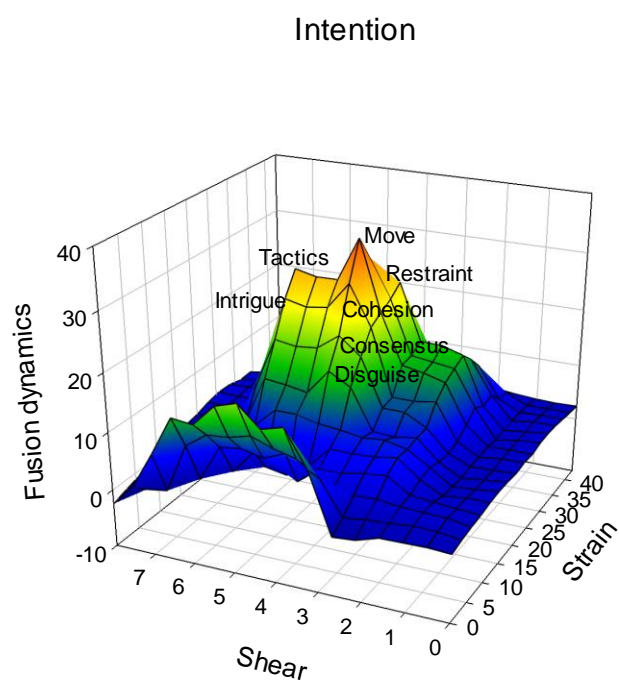
To be able to establish a correlation between the essence of Machiavelli's text and the text the student has produced, the holophors for the student's *Intention* and *Orientation* are presented in Figure 1. The Orientation, which is formed by the Objective component, describes the textual theme, while the Intention, based on the Agent component, emphasizes the motif, which reflects the perspective. The description begins with the Orientation, from which the perspective will be extracted in the next step. What happens in this process is a transformation showing from which point of view the theme is seen. When it happens that the same term is found in both Orientation and Intention, the meaning must not be exactly the same, depending on the particular point of view, which in turn is composed of the relative relationships of other terms along the path.

### **Orientation**

The first thing that can be observed from the Orientation graph of Figure 1 is the two-part form, although one of the mountain sides is higher than the other. If we start on the right side and climb upwards, the first term we meet is *Infiltration*. It involves a deliberate rule breaking in order to get advantages in a competitive situation. Such behaviour includes attempts to occupy other domains in secret rather than to challenge openly. A similar way to avoid transparency is implied in *Intrigue*. It means to avoid acting under the general code of conduct. Such an approach incorporates multiple, sometimes disorderly, actions, which together form *Tactics*. This term indicates a number of low-level operations that link goals and means, at least in the short term.

*Heresy* means to keep at a distance the religious and ethical values that the Catholic Church stands for, which is seen as a serious breach of dogmas. This term is strongly associated with the endpoint *Apostasy*, related to a general criticism or opposition to current policy. When we reach this point, it is clear that the path coincide well with Machiavelli's Orientation, whose end point is *Heretic*, supported by *Apostate* (B. Bierschenk, 2012, p. 14). An apostate is a person who not only is experiencing a dramatic change in his convictions but also is fighting for a realistic life.

Deep in the structure of the graph's left side appear two consecutive terms. Seen from a renegade's viewpoint, *Indulgence* is not consistent with expected ethics of the Church but in light of the tactical conduct that the right side expresses, it is a matter of striving for clarity in order to survive. In this context, *Absolution* means a desire for relief before the dilemma not to take a clear stand between the divine and the real. In connection with the ethics and politics, the attractor *Responsibility* points towards a broader view of the individual and collective duties. Renaissance differed between individual and social happiness. *Cohesion*, a term that indicates striving for an orderly whole and sometimes stability, is functionally related to responsibility. This kind of cooperation indicates high-level operations, as opposed to the tactical action.



**Figure 1** *Holophoric representation of Intention and Orientation*



### ***Intention***

The Intention graph shows a more uniform configuration with a single steep rock formation as the most prominent aspect. The rebirth of the ancient ideals and renewal of knowledge is often associated with the Renaissance period. The peak is specified by the attractor *Move*, indicating a pursuit towards advancement and more generally forward motion, renewal, as opposed to staying in the dogmatic domains of the Church. On the other hand, *Tactics* relates to a series of steps which limits the opponent's options. There was a movement, however, that tried to bring together science and religious practice.

However, *Restraint* implies that it is hardly possible to combine a reactionary move or retreat and renewal or progress in a transparent manner, so *Intrigue* is needed to mask a doctrine's true face. This situation affects the political action in the utilitarian direction. *Cohesion* means in this context an attempt at collaboration, which is linked to the process of seeking *Consensus*, that is, concord for reaching solutions. Regardless of whether this process is political or ethical-religious, one must make use of tactical considerations. To achieve progress, the tactics needs to be supported by *Disguise*.

In comparison with Machiavelli's Intention (B. Bierschenk, 2012, p. 16) where *Warning* implies awareness of the difficulty of choosing idealism before realism, *Move* appears here as a choice to take steps forward along the chosen path.

### **Reflections**

When comparing the two graphs, we can distinguish a clear complementarity, which has to do with the dependence that exists between Agent and Objective when they interact in text production. In the Orientation graph, it is clear that there is a duality in the grouping of the viewpoints. The greatest energy is taken to produce the relationships that concern the effects of and background to a non-dogmatic living. The lower energy relates to the civic responsibility that exists after all. From the depths a sense evolves that it might be humiliating to have to be oppositional, that is, idealist, so therefore you have to feel respect for both the skeptic and the renegade.

The Intention graph shows that the perspective, as expected, is unified. *Tactics*, *Intrigue* and *Cohesion* are the three terms that emerge from both graphs, albeit at different levels in the structure. The terms express the balance between moving forward and to fend off the obstacles, or if you like, the fusion between means and goals. An interesting structural difference between the concepts is presented in the original's *Heretic* and *Apostate* and the student's *Heresy* and *Apostasy*. The original text has been produced in Renaissance real time and expresses a personal act. The young person of today has projected more of an atmosphere, a mood.

Both the orientation and the intention of the Renaissance text are in accord with the young reader's perception of the most central idea in *Dvärgen*. This is to say that Lagerkvist has made the essence of the Machiavellian thinking appear by "translating" it into a story. This thinking seems to exist without reference to *The Prince*. The life lived in the prince's circuits in Renaissance Italy has been portrayed in fiction so well that the student has picked up the central idea in the quote through the story. We can thus conclude that a double transformation has taken place. The time span from Machiavelli in 1521 to a Swedish reader in the early 2000s is staggering, and language still carries that mentality, despite the cultural distance (I. Bierschenk, 1989). Thus the result should be understood so that there is a mental condition in the contemporary reader that enables it to perceive the essence of the Machiavellian mentality, which in turn is written into Lagerkvist's text. However, the reader does not seem to be aware of it, because otherwise the text had been given a different and probably also a more condensed formulation.

Now, is there anything admirable hidden in the intermediated structure? In order to arrive at a satisfactory answer to the question of what “human greatness” means, we will go back to Lagerkvist’s idea of literary vocation. He hesitated on the poet’s role: Sometimes he is the chosen one, the seer, who shall convey the message of the visible, material reality and the intangible, unseen. Sometimes he is the “bleary-eyed” who only sees the lowness of the literary vocation. He actually wanted to get away from the exalted, exaggerated and false in this vocation. Throughout his work and deed Lagerkvist struggled with the feeling of being “guest of reality”. The depiction of human evil must mean to portray oneself and his own low person, he said. Only this way we will get hold of what is permanent. In the dwarf’s way of expressing his thoughts on life, love and religion emerges almost exclusively a contempt for how people interact with the major issues, or at least a total incomprehension. This stiff cold must be resisted. Better, then, to express a living doubt. Master Bernardo may be a bit of spokesperson for the author himself. He discusses life and creation with the prince, and seems enchanted by the greatness of man and human thought. On the other hand, what we can master is so insignificant after all, he says. We are born to be attracted by the eternal sky and believe we belong to it. But: “What are wings for, as they never really get lifted. They become a burden instead of liberation“ (*Dvärgen*, p. 55). Man’s greatness lies perhaps in accepting the immature and imperfect life, and the doubleness we live by. It is the effort that lifts us.

From Lagerkvist’s personal notes, Schöier (1987) quotes:

Anden finns i allt – den behöver vara ädel, stark etc. men har också behov av att vara svag, listig, halvgången etc.etc. Den har behov av att leva hela detta märkliga liv i *allt*: mänskösjal, djur, växter, ting, materia – men i själva verket *ingen dualism*? Livet, tingen, naturen *är* ande – Ej ett motsatsförhållande materia-ande. Blott för vår ofullkomliga känsla ter det sig så. Vi märker det jordiska, materiella långt starkare, tydligare? Nej, förnimmer det som något *för sig* och anden som något annat, för sig. Men i själva verket ej så? Ej någon dualism. (p. 325)

The spirit exists in everything, he says. It needs to be noble but at the same time weak. It has a need for living this remarkable life in everything, living and non-living. Here Lagerkvist’s reasoning is in fact concluding that man’s different sides are its whole. The dualism he denies in the end, namely that which can be represented through pairs of opposites, assumes symmetry, in my opinion. Instead, there is asymmetry between the properties. Otherwise, we would not be able to describe them as immature, for example. For this reason, one cannot tell how a person is, because life is not a being, but a becoming. Therefore, the dwarf’s personality does not change; he boasts of having only one side, namely the straight and obvious one. He calls the prince false, and when Don Riccardo’s funeral is taking place: “As soon as it comes to disguise himself, he is always admirable. But it may not be worth so much admiration really. It is in fact his nature to hide“ (*Dvärgen*, p. 150).

Lagerkvist means that we are living as in a mist, we often see the world with dim eyes, or reflect us “in cloudy mirrors” (*Dvärgen*, p. 211), but if we open our eyes and are realists perhaps the true reality emerges. It is better to devote one’s energies to “the bad reality” than to indulge in “the good divinity” is a conclusion from the analysis of the Machiavellian maxim (B. Bierschenk, 2012, p. 16). In light of the present results, the “greatness” of the prince lies in that he adapts to the reality he lives in. He lets his dwarf do service when he deems it necessary, but relegates him to the basement when he no longer needs him. What is this if not the core of utilitarianism?

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*Accepted May 5, 2013*